

(19)



Europäisches Patentamt  
European Patent Office  
Office européen des brevets

(11) Publication number:

**0 036 050**  
**A1**

(12)

# EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

(21) Application number: 80301147.7

(51) Int. Cl.<sup>3</sup>: **B 21 K 21/08**  
**B 21 C 23/03, H 01 T 21/02**

(22) Date of filing: 10.04.80

(30) Priority: 19.03.80 GB 8009299

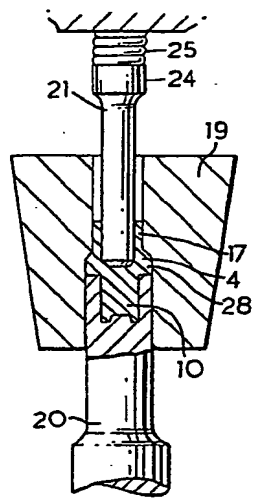
(43) Date of publication of application:  
23.09.81 Bulletin 81/38(84) Designated Contracting States:  
DE FR GB(71) Applicant: **FORD MOTOR COMPANY LIMITED**  
Eagle Way  
Brentwood Essex CM13 3BW(GB)(84) Designated Contracting States:  
GB(71) Applicant: **FORD-WERKE AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT**  
Ottoplatz 2 Postfach 210369  
D-5000 Köln 21(DE)(84) Designated Contracting States:  
DE(71) Applicant: **FORD FRANCE SOCIETE ANONYME**  
344 Avenue Napoleon Bonaparte B.P. 307  
F-92506 Rueil Malmaison Cedex(FR)(84) Designated Contracting States:  
FR(72) Inventor: **Bailey, Robert James**  
104 Winnington Road  
Enfield Middlesex EN3 5RL(GB)(74) Representative: **Drakeford, Robert William et al,**  
**Ford Motor Company Limited 15/448, Research &**  
**Engineering Centre Laindon**  
**Basildon Essex SS15 6EE(GB)**

(54) Method of forming spark plug bodies.

(57) A method of manufacturing a hollow spark plug body having a cylindrical central portion (28), a first end portion (10) of smaller circular radial cross-section and a second end portion ( ) of non-circular radial cross-section, e.g. hexagonal, and of smaller maximum diameter than the central portion by cold extruding the both end portions. The second end portion is extruded in two stages, the first involving the formation of a recess in one end of a cylindrical blank, the second involving extrusion the blank between a die (19) and a mandrel (21) which moves with the blank during extrusion

EP 0 036 050 A1

./...



- 2 -

DESCRIPTION

1 This invention relates to a method of manufacturing spark plug bodies.

Conventional spark plug bodies comprise a central, usually cylindrical, portion, defining a radial flange for sealing the body to an aperture in an engine, a lower cylindrical portion  
5 which is formed with a thread, and an upper portion of non-circular, usually hexagonal, radial cross section which is adapted to be engaged by a spanner.

In most spark plugs, the upper portion has a larger  
10 maximum diameter than the central portion, which is in turn of larger diameter than the lower portion. Since the widest part of the body is positioned at its upper end, such bodies can easily be manufactured using a cold extrusion process in which a metal blank is subjected to a sequence of forward extrusion steps in a set of  
15 dies of gradually decreasing diameters.

In some circumstances however, it is desirable that the upper portion of the body should be of smaller maximum diameter than the central portion. For example, in some engines the spark plug is positioned in a recess in the engine head. A smaller  
20 diameter upper portion facilitates access to the spark plug with a spanner.

Hitherto such spark plug bodies have been manufactured by cold extrusion of a blank to produce the smaller-diameter lower portion and then forming the upper portion thereon by a machining  
25 operation. Since the upper portion is usually of hexagonal radial cross-sectional, such a machining operation is relatively expensive to perform, especially as a large scale production process.

According to the present invention there is provided a method of manufacturing a spark plug body comprising the steps of  
30 shaping a cylindrical blank by cold extrusion to produce an axially elongated hollow body having a cylindrical central portion, and a first end portion having a circular radial cross-section of smaller diameter than the central portion, and forming on the opposite end a second end portion of non-circular radial cross-section of

- 3 -

1 smaller maximum diameter than the central portion, characterised in  
that the second end portion is also formed by cold extrusion.

The second end portion is preferably formed in two cold  
extrusion steps. In the first step, the blank is extruded to form  
5 a recess in one end of the blank without decreasing the external  
diameter of the blank in the region of the recess. This recess is  
preferably formed to a depth sufficient to provide enough material  
in the walls of the recess for the formation of the second end  
portion and the central portion, leaving enough material for the  
10 formation of the first end portion in the remainder of the blank.  
In the second extrusion step, the external diameter of the recessed  
end of the blank is reduced and formed into a non-circular cross-  
sectional shape, without decreasing the internal diameter of the  
recess. This is conveniently achieved by extruding the recessed  
15 end of the blank between a die and a mandrel positioned in the  
recess. In order to prevent the material from the other end of the  
blank from flowing over the mandrel, the mandrel is preferably  
movable relative to the die in the direction in which the blank is  
extruded. Where the die is to be used repeatedly, the mandrel is  
20 preferably movable relative to the die against the bias of means,  
such as a compression spring, which restores the mandrel to a  
starting position relative to the die when a formed blank has been  
removed from the die.

The first end portion is preferably also formed in a two  
25 step process. In the first step the end of the blank is cold  
extruded to produce a solid cylindrical tail portion of reduced  
diameter. In the second stage a recess is formed within the tail  
portion. This recess is of depth sufficient to form a cylindrical  
end portion of the required length so that the centre of the end  
30 portion can be punched out to produce a passage through the spark  
plug body for receiving an insulator. The tail portion is prefer-  
ably formed in an initial cold extrusion step carried out on the  
blank.

A preferred embodiment of the invention will now be  
35 described, by way of example only with reference to the accompany-

- 4 -

1 ing schematic drawings in which:-

Figures 1 to 8 represent axial cross-sections through a series of dies in which a blank is successively cold extruded in accordance with the method of the invention.

5 Figure 9 is an elevation of a blank which has been cold extruded in the dies illustrated in Figures 1 to 8, and

Figure 10 is an elevation of a finished spark plug body produced from the extruded blank of Figure 9.

Referring to Figures 1 to 8, a cylindrical blank is cut  
10 from a circular-section bar of steel and is subjected to a series of cold extrusions in a six-stage cold forming press. The press includes a linear array of six cold extrusion stations each of which has a die and a plunger, for forcing a blank into the die, the plungers being positioned on one side of the machine and the  
15 dies being positioned on the other side of the machine. A transfer mechanism operates to index blanks cut from the steel bar successively through the six stations.

In the first station, illustrated in Figure 1, the plunger  
1 forces a cylindrical blank cut from the bar of steel into a first  
20 die 2 having cylindrical recess 3, the inner end of which is domed. The resulting bullet-shaped blank 4 is removed from the first die by means of a knock-out pin 5, which is held rigid during the movement of the plunger 1 into the die 2, and is transferred to a die 7 (Fig. 2) in the second station by the transfer mechanism  
25 (not shown).

In the second die 7, the bullet shaped blank is subjected to forward extrusion into a cylindrical recess 8 in the inner end of the die cavity 9 to partly form a solid cylindrical tail portion 10 on the blank of reduced diameter. The blank 4 is then  
30 transferred into a die 12 in the third station (Fig. 3) and subjected to cold extrusion therein by the plunger 14. The plunger 14 forms a recess 15 in one end 16 of the blank 4 by backward extrusion and elongates the tail portion 10. The extrusion also results in a slight "heading" or increase in the diameter of the  
35 blank 4.

- 5 -

1           The recess 15 is formed in the blank to a depth  
sufficient to provide enough material in the walls 16 of the recess  
15 (i.e. below the line A-A in Fig. 3) for all subsequent forming  
operations on the main body part of the blank, and to leave  
5           sufficient material in the tail portion 10 for all subsequent  
forming operations thereon. That is to say, during all the  
subsequent forming operations no material is extruded across line  
A-A in Figure 3 in either direction.

          The blank 4 is then removed from the third die 12 by a  
10          knock-out pin 18 and transferred into a die 19 (Fig. 4) in the  
fourth station. During this transfer the blank 4 is inverted  
relative to the dies.

          Figure 4 illustrates the relative configuration of the  
fourth die 19, the plunger 20, knock-out pin 21 and blank 4 at the  
15          beginning of the working part of the stroke of the plunger 20, and  
Figure 5 illustrated their configuration at the end of the stroke.

          The plunger 20 includes a central recess having of  
complementary cross-section to the tail portion 10 of the blank 4.  
The die 19 includes a main cylindrical recess for receiving the  
20          recessed end of the blank 4 and a coaxial passage 23 of hexagonal  
radial cross-section in which a mandrel 24 is centrally positioned.  
The mandrel 24 is movable axially relative to the die 19 and is  
biased into the passage 23 by means of a compression spring 25.

          As the plunger executes its working stroke, the recessed  
25          end of the blank 4 is forward extruded into the passage 23 around  
the mandrel 24 so that the maximum external diameter of the recessed  
end<sup>17</sup> of the blank 4 is reduced, but the internal diameter of the  
recess 15 is kept constant.

          During the working stroke of the plunger 19, the mandrel  
30          24 moves upwardly (as seen in Figures 4 and 5) relative to the die  
so that its position relative to the tail portion 10 of the blank 4  
remains unaltered. The quantity of material in the central  
portion 28 of the blank 4 thus remains unaltered.

          The blank 4 is then transferred to a die 30 in the fifth  
35          station and is again inverted relative to the dies during this

- 6 -

1 transfer. The fifth die 30 contains a main cylindrical bore 31  
having a diameter equal to that of the central portion 28 of the  
blank 4, and cylindrical extension 32 at the end thereof receiving  
the tail portion 10 and closed by a knock-out pin 33 which remains  
5 fixed during the working part of the stroke of the plunger 34.

The plunger 34 is of smaller diameter than the recess 15  
and, when pressed into the blank 4 causes backward extrusion of the  
tail portion 10 of the blank to form a recess 38 therein, as  
illustrated in Figure 7.

10 The blank 4 is then transferred to a sixth station  
containing a die 40 having a recess similar to that of the die in  
the fifth station. However the tail 10 of the blank 4 abuts a  
hollow knock-out pin 42 having a central axial passage 43. The  
plunger 44 is of smaller diameter than the recess 38 in the tail  
15 portion 10 so that, when actuated, the plunger 44 punches out the  
end of the tail portion 10 to produce an axial passage through the  
blank.

The shaped blank 4, illustrated in Figure 9 is then  
subjected to a finishing treatment in which a thread 50 is rolled  
20 on to the exterior of the tail portion 10, the hexagonal end  
portion is undercut to form a hexagonal head 52, the ends 54, 55 of  
the blank 4 are milled smooth, and a side electrode 58 is welded on  
to the end of the tail portion 10. The body is then ready for  
assembly into a spark plug.

25 The process described above therefore permits a non-  
circular, e.g. hexagonal end to be formed on the spark plug body  
which, like the tail portion 10, has a maximum diameter smaller  
than that of the central portion 28 of the body by means of a cold  
extrusion process which avoids complicated milling operations.

- 7 -

CLAIMS

- 1           1. A method of manufacturing a spark plug body comprising the steps of shaping a cylindrical blank by cold extrusion to produce an axially elongated hollow body having a cylindrical central portion,<sup>and</sup> a first end portion having a circular radial cross-section of smaller diameter than the central portion, and forming on the opposite end a second end portion of non-circular radial cross-section of smaller maximum diameter than the central portion, characterised in that the second end portion is also formed by cold extrusion.
- 10           2. A method according to Claim 1 wherein the second end portion is formed by cold extruding the blank in a first step to form a recess in one end thereof, and cold extruding the recessed end of the blank in a second step to reduce its external diameter and to form a non-circular external cross-sectional shape thereon  
15 without decreasing the internal diameter of the recess.
3. A process according to Claim 2 wherein the recess is of a depth sufficient to provide enough material in the walls of the recess for the formation of the second end portion and the central portion, and to leave sufficient material in the remainder  
20 of the blank for the formation of the first end portion.
4. A process according to any one of Claims 1 to 3 wherein the second end portion is formed by cold extruding the recessed end of the blank between a die and a mandrel positioned in the recess.
- 25           5. A process according to Claim 4 wherein the mandrel is moved relative to the die during extrusion in the direction in which the second end portion is extruded.
6. A process according to Claim 5 wherein the mandrel moves against a restoring force.



- 8 -

1           7. A process according to any one of Claims 1 to 6  
wherein the first end portion is formed by cold extruding the blank  
to produce a solid cylindrical tail portion of reduced diameter and  
further cold extruding the blank to form a recess within the tail  
5 portion.

8. A process according to Claim 7 wherein the solid  
cylindrical tail portion is formed before the second portion is  
formed.

10          9. A method according to any one of Claims 1 to 8  
wherein the cold extrusion is effected in a multi-stage cold  
forming press in which the blank is indexed through a plurality of  
cold extrusion stations and in which the blank is inverted during  
its movement between stations at which the cold extrusion operations  
are performed on the first and the second end portions.

15          10. A method of producing spark plug bodies substantially  
as hereinbefore described with reference to the drawings.

3/1

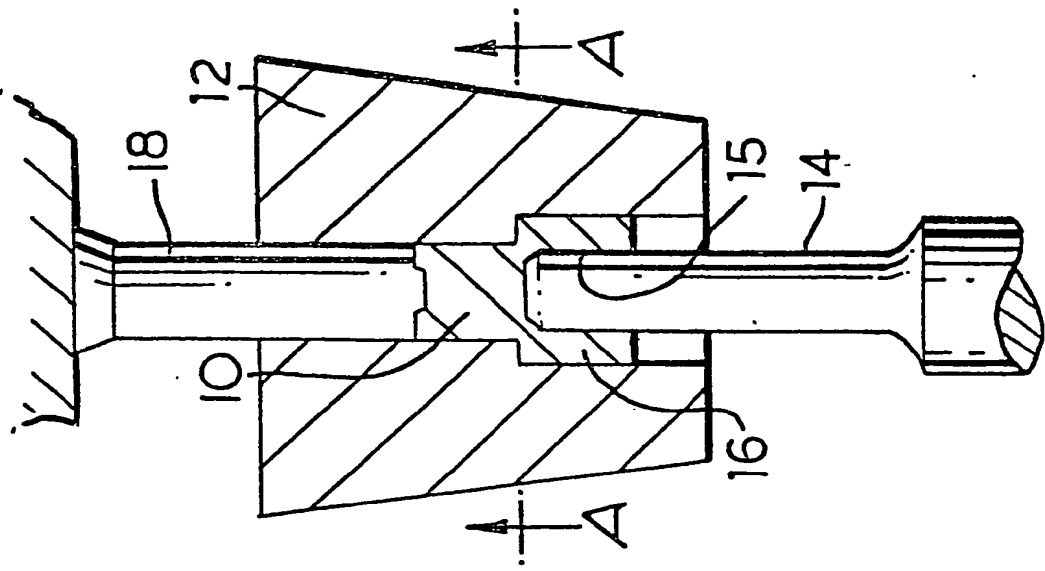


FIG. 3

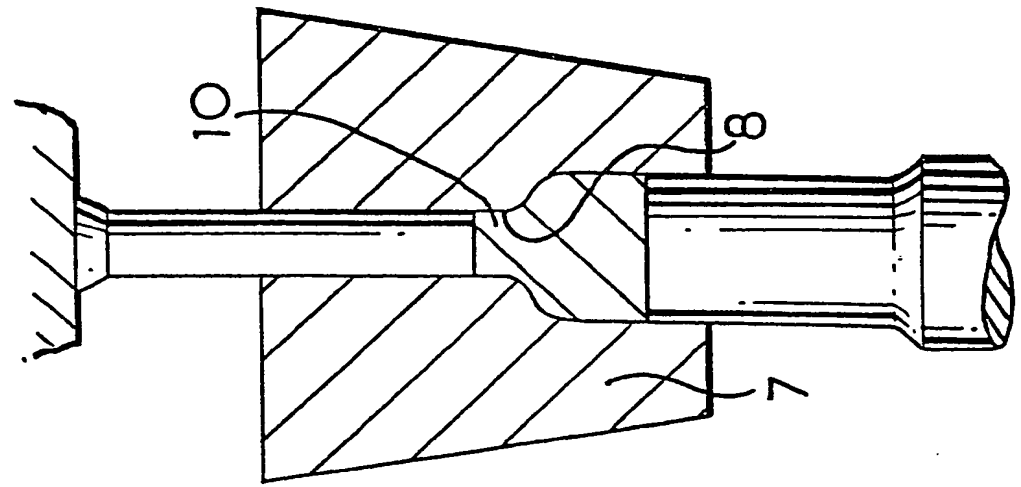


FIG. 2

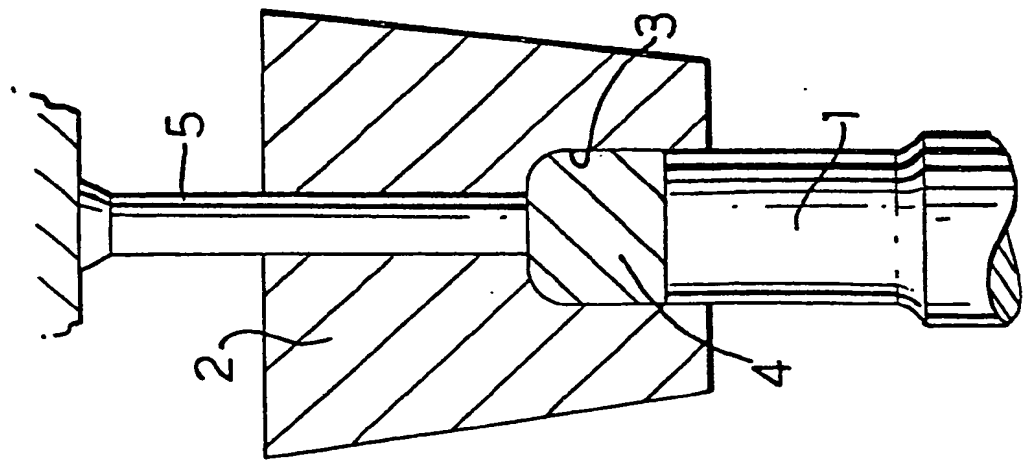
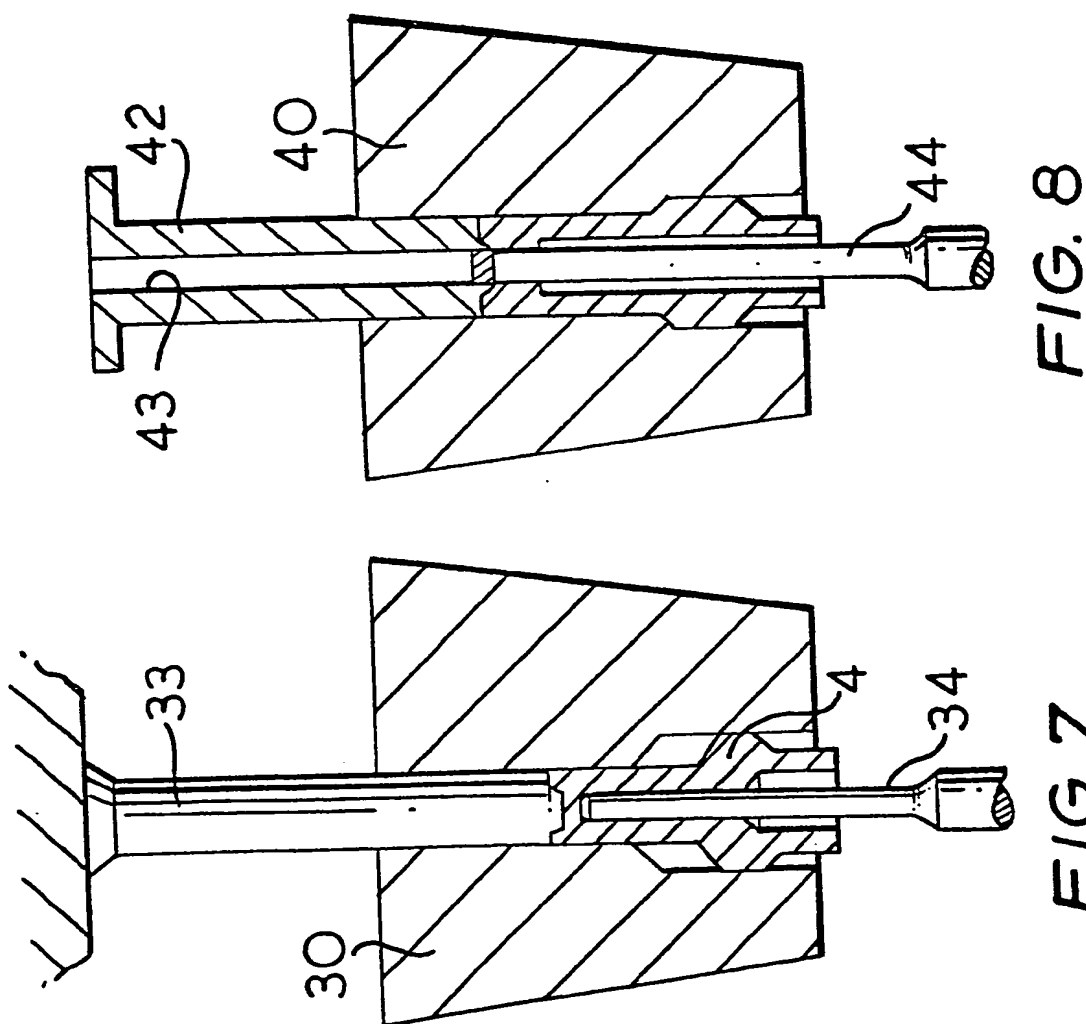
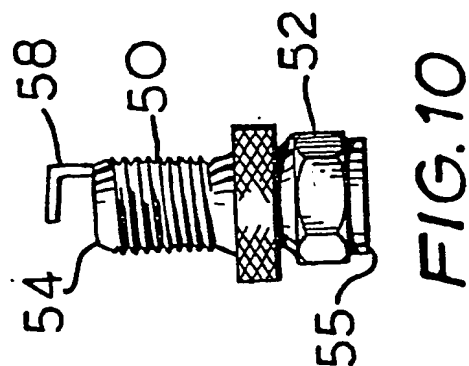
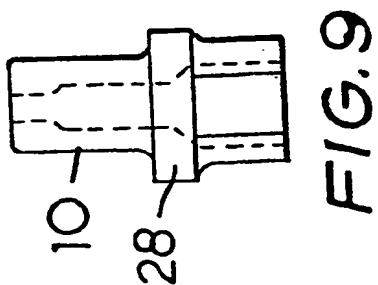


FIG. 1







European Patent  
Office

# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0036050

Application number

EP 80 30 1147

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 7)
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	
	<u>US - A - 1 672 082</u> (OAKLEY) * Page 2, line 14 - page 3, line 45; figures *	1-4, 7,8	B 21 K 21/08 B 21 C 23/03 H 01 T 21/02
	--		
	<u>US - A - 3 072 933</u> (CARLSON) * Column 6, line 7 - column 7, line 2; figures 8-14 *	1	
	--		
A	<u>US - A - 1 726 264</u> (HAMILTON)		
A	<u>US - A - 3 186 209</u> (FRIEDMAN)		
A	<u>DE - B - 1 087 879</u> (MALMEDIE & CO)		
A	<u>DE - C - 934 265</u> (HATEBUR)		
A	<u>GB - A - 782 944</u> (BOSCH)		
A	<u>GB - A - 747 572</u> (BOSCH)		
	----		
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 7)
			B 21 K B 21 C H 01 T
			CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS
			X: particularly relevant A: technological background O: non-written disclosure P: intermediate document T: theory or principle underlying the invention E: conflicting application D: document cited in the application L: citation for other reasons
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			&: member of the same patent family. corresponding document
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 03-06-1981	Examiner THE

**This Page Blank (uspto)**